

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

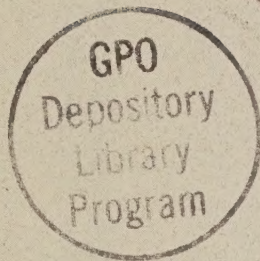




# "The Apache Trail" A National Scenic Byway

A Portion of State Highway 88  
Mesa & Tonto Basin Ranger Districts

04 FEB 1991



Reserve  
aGV1024  
.A62  
1990

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

PREPARED BY  
Forest  
Service

Tonto  
National  
Forest





*Published 9/90 on recycled paper.*

# The Apache Trail

The original "Apache Trail" had its beginnings many centuries ago as an aboriginal highway through the rugged Superstition Mountains. By the late 1800's, the "Tonto Trail" (as it was known) became a horse trail for settlers and Indians alike. The present road was financed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation so that supplies could be hauled from the Phoenix area to the site of Roosevelt Dam (which was begun in 1905). Later responsibility was taken over by the State of Arizona, and it was made a State highway.

In 1908, the area through which the roadway passes was established as a Forest Reserve (later to be designated the Tonto National Forest). The Forest Service, USDA, administers this area — guided by a variety of federal laws—with the basic mission of protecting its resources while serving the people of this country.

The entire State Highway 88 is approximately 78 miles long, winding in and out of some of the most awe-inspiring country in Arizona, or for that matter, in the West. It is bounded on the north by Canyon, Apache and Roosevelt lakes, and on the south by the rugged (and to many, forbidding) Superstition Mountains and the wilderness area of that same name. Of its total distance, 38 miles were designated a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1988.

## Gas, Water, Food

These items can be obtained at Apache Junction, Tortilla Flat (MP 213 1/4+), Apache Lake Resort (MP 229 1/4) and Roosevelt (MP 240 1/2). The only car repair services are at Apache Junction or Miami-Globe.

## Road Conditions

The Scenic Byway portion of the "Apache Trail," with numerous sharp curves and an occasional narrow stretch of road, is safe to all but the reckless driver. Traffic is moderately heavy on weekends but on weekdays it is lighter. On weekdays, one is apt to meet a road grader or a work crew. Pulling trailers of any type over this road is discouraged.



To help you on your way, we suggest you obtain a Tonto National Forest Visitor's Map which is available at all local Forest Service offices as well as local map stores.

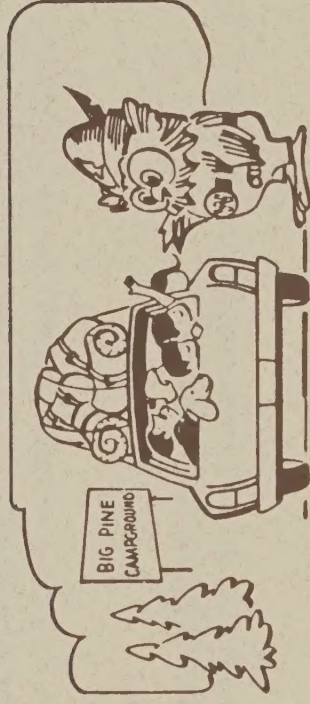
A significant part of the Byway is unpaved, but is normally suitable for passenger cars. Keep to the right. Drive carefully at all times.

At Fish Creek Hill (MP 223.5 to 222.0), the road is primarily one-way (with turnouts), climaxing in a 1,000 foot drop in elevation over a 15 to 17 percent grade, hugging the 1,000 foot bronze bluffs with fascinating, colorful scenery.

You will want to gawk and take pictures, so stop at the vista voints listed for this area. Don't look while driving. It is dangerous not only because of the precipitous country but also due to oncoming cars. The road is safe but one must pay close attention to twists, turns, and pitches ahead.

Prepare yourself for a most unusual experience: a trip of some of the most spectacular scenery to be seen in the west.

Further Information on the Apache Trail may be obtained at our District Ranger's offices in Mesa, Roosevelt or Globe.



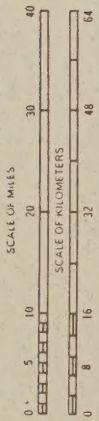
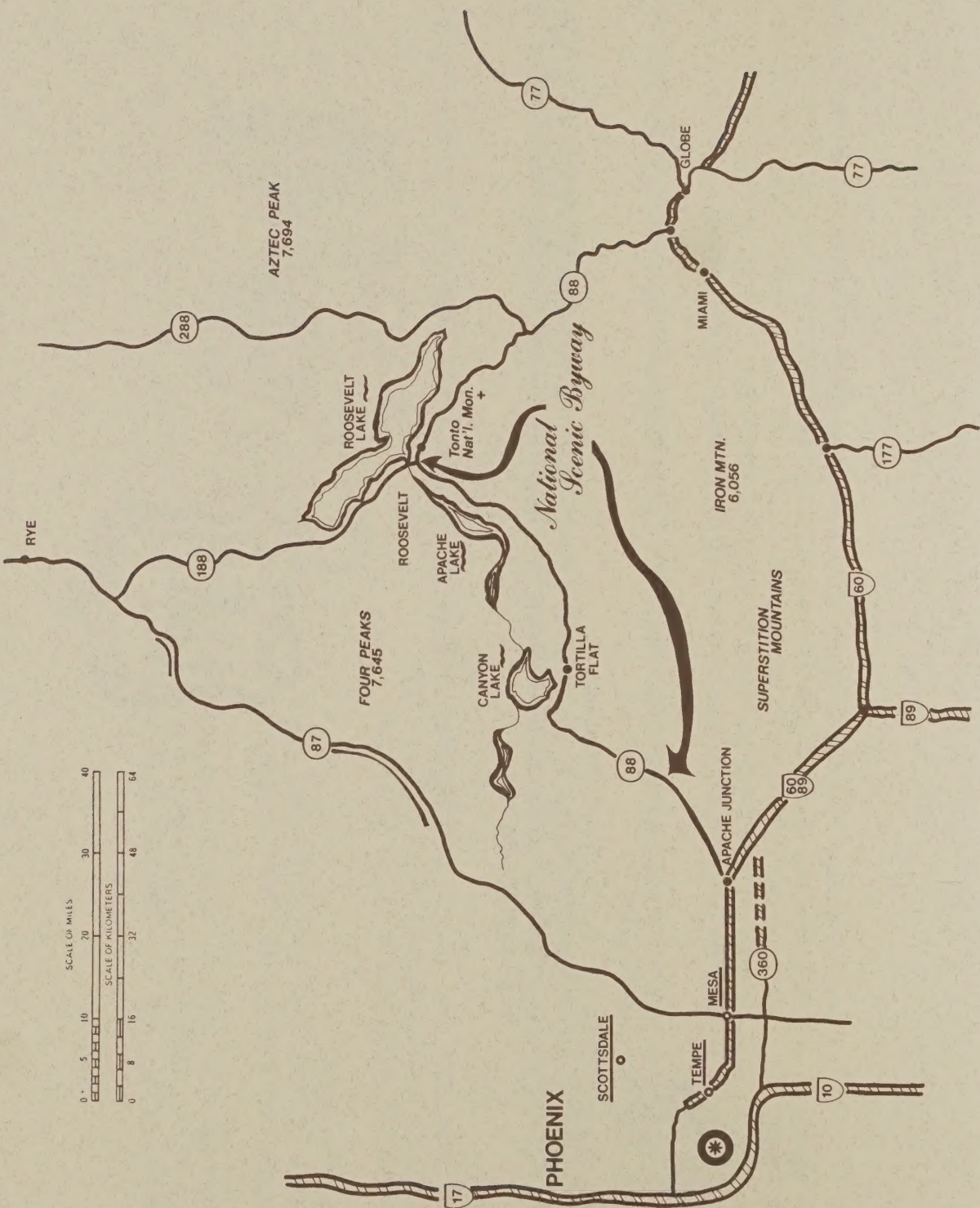
From downtown Phoenix, drive east on U.S. Highway 60/89 to the town of Apache Junction (approximately 30 miles). State Highway 88 branches off to the left. As you drive up this road (the "Apache Trail"), you will pass the old Goldfield Mine, the Bluebird Store, and the Lost Dutchman State Park (a good spot for a picnic or overnight camping). Just past the entrance to the State Park, there is a large entrance sign for the Tonto National Forest.

This is the point where the National Scenic Byway begins. Please set your trip odometer on 0.0 at this point.

On the other hand, if you are already at Roosevelt, you will need to set your trip odometer at 0.0 at a small communications building at the edge of the road 1/4 mile past the junction of State Highways 88 and 188.









## How to Use This Brochure

The brochure is arranged for a "south to north" tour (that is from Phoenix to Roosevelt Dam). The tour can, however, be followed in a "north to south" direction as well. If that is the direction of your travel, simply start at the last section of this brochure and "work back" toward the beginning. Trip odometer references are the columns on the right for both the "south to north" and "north to south" routes. State milepost references for both are in the left column.

**Enjoy your tour!**

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest  | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |   | South-North             | North-South |
| 201 <sup>1/4</sup>             | <p><b>Tonto National Forest Boundary</b> — With 2,960,000 acres, the Tonto is one of the largest National Forests in the country. It is 60 miles wide and 90 miles north and south, reaching to the Mogollon Rim. Multiple use management of its water, recreation, timber, forage, and wildlife resources is designed to protect these resources while serving the people of this country. This is the southern end of the Forest Service's National Scenic Byway.</p>   | 0.0                     | 37.8        |
| 201 <sup>1/4</sup> +           | <p><b>First Water Road #18</b> — East 2.5 miles (just beyond the cattleguard) to a main trailhead of the Superstition Wilderness: only hiking and animal travel permitted. Two trails: Dutchman's Trail and Second Water Trail.</p>   | 0.1                     | 37.7        |
| 202 <sup>1/4</sup>             | <p><b>The Apache Trail (Sign)</b> — This route made its beginning many hundreds of years ago when the "Ancient People" who preceded the Apaches lived in the mysterious Superstition country. The aboriginal trail was reported as generally following the present route. In the late 1800's, the "Tonto Trail" had evolved into a horse trail used by settlers and Indians alike.</p> <p>The present day "Apache Trail" was built under the direction of the U.S. Reclamation Service to bring supplies to Roosevelt Dam. Actual construction began in November 1903. At the peak of construction, 400 Apache and Pima Indians were employed in building the road; they were considered to be very reliable and skilled craftsmen.</p> | 1.2                     | —           |



|                    |  |     |      |
|--------------------|--|-----|------|
| 203                | <p><b>Needle Vista (Sign identifies Needle Vista)</b> — Presents an unusually fine view of Weaver’s Needle, presumably named after Pauline Weaver, an old time Arizona guide who led a party into Central Arizona in 1862. The Needle was the first triangulation station of surveying parties in Arizona. It is also a common landmark for those foolish enough to seek the so-called Lost Dutchman’s Gold Mine. Elevation 4,535 feet.</p>  | 1.7 | 36.3 |
| 203 <sup>1/2</sup> | <p><b>Government Wells</b> — An early watering place for the teams of mules and horses hauling supplies to build Roosevelt Dam. As many as 20 animals were needed to haul the huge freight loads. Stage and freight lines operated between Phoenix and Globe (via Roosevelt) from 1914 to 1939. One of the actual coaches used may be viewed at the Mesa Southwest Museum.</p>   | 2.3 | 35.8 |
| 204 <sup>1/4</sup> | <p><b>Goldfield Mountains</b> — Nice view to the northwest into a rugged, almost impassable area rising to 2,800 feet elevation.</p>   | 2.9 | 34.8 |
| 205 <sup>3/4</sup> | <p><b>Apache Gap</b> — Elevation 2,304 feet. Unusual foreground showing brilliantly hued rock formations in Goldfield Mountains to left. They date back to Tertiary Geologic Age, 70 million years ago. Early day Indians established a trail through the gap leading down towards the Salt River. With sharp eyes one can see evidences of the trail by following the water holes below.</p> <p>Rhyolite, with some shistose out-croppings, is the most common rock to be seen. Malpais, red and yellow-green cliffs, palisades, and unique rock formations may be viewed as you drive through this historic “gap”.</p> | 4.6 | 33.6 |

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest  | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |   | South-North             | North-South |
| 208                            | <p>The mountains, for the 5 miles from Apache Gap to Canyon Lake Vista, were once known as the Little Alps because of the numerous colorful rugged-peaks and sharp twists in the road.</p> <p><b>Four Peaks</b> — Look to the northeast; these sky-high peaks of the Mazatzal mountain range beckon you from all points on the compass. They were the scene of Army skirmishes with the Indians in 1867 and 1874. Accessible via the Four Peaks Road from the west and El Oso Road from the east (both are very rough). The highest peak is 7,645 feet. In 1984, Congress established this area as an official wilderness and it is now popular with hikers and horsemen.</p> | 6.5                     | 31.3        |
| 208 <sup>1/2</sup>             | <p><b>Canyon Lake Vista Point</b> — An excellent place to stop for an overview of Canyon Lake. This lake has a surface area of 950 acres with water rights belonging to the Salt River Water Users Association.</p>   | 7.0                     | 31.0        |
| 208 <sup>3/4</sup>             | <p><b>Mormon Flat Road</b> — North one mile to Mormon Flat Dam (closed to the public). Completed in 1925, the dam backs up Canyon Lake 10 miles. Fanciful legend (not true) relates that a band of Mormons were massacred here by the Apaches.</p>  | 7.3                     | 30.9        |
| 208 +                          | <p><b>Whirlpool Rocks</b> — Look west across the road and up. See the swirling water frozen in place! Or if you are truly imaginative, you may see swirling snakes frozen in eons gone by. Geologists say swirling water caused these rounded formations.</p>   | 7.4                     | 30.8        |



|                      |  |      |      |
|----------------------|--|------|------|
| 209                  | <p><b>From the South, Entering Canyon Lake National Forest Recreation Area</b>— You are entering one of the major recreation areas on the Tonto National Forest, where over 2,500,000 visitor days are spent annually relaxing in the out-of-doors.</p>  | 7.5  | —    |
| 209 <sup>1/2</sup>   | <p><b>Canyon Lake</b> — A one-way bridge crosses First Water Cove. This cove is managed as a quiet fishing spot for devotees of Isaak Walton.</p>  | 8.0  | —    |
| 210 <sup>1/2</sup>   | <p><b>Acacia Beach and Picnic Site</b> — Ramadas, tables and barbeque grills are provided by the Forest Service free of charge. Beach protected from boaters so that people may enjoy the water. Parking for 105 cars.</p>   | 9.0  | 29.3 |
| 210 <sup>3/4</sup> - | <p><b>Palo Verde Recreation Site</b> — A paved boat-launching ramp and a few picnic tables. Large parking areas for boaters are available.</p>   | 9.2  | 29.1 |
| 210 <sup>3/4</sup> + | <p><b>Boulder Recreation Site</b> — Ramadas, picnic tables, grills and a wheel-chair accessible fishing dock.</p>  | 9.4  | 29.0 |
| 211                  | <p><b>Canyon Lake Marina</b> — Under permit from the Forest Service, this concession provides a variety of services to the public, including boat storage and repair, a picnic ground, snackbar, store, etc. The parking lot can also be used by hikers for the Boulder Trail #103 which begins just across the highway.</p> | 9.6  | 28.7 |
| 211                  | <p><b>Laguna Recreation Site</b> — A boat-launching site with sanitation facilities.</p>   | 10.0 | 28.4 |

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest   | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |  | South-North             | North-South |
| 212 <sup>1/2</sup>             | <p><b>Tortilla Vista Point</b> — Elevation 1,979 feet. Divide between Canyon Lake and Tortilla Flat. Care must be taken in parking, because this is a blind spot. Hike to top of ridge is short and worthwhile. An excellent full-length view of Canyon Lake and the surrounding mountains, east and west with Tortilla Flat lying 400 feet below. Look for:</p> <p><b>Geronimo Head</b> - South — Elevation 2,500 feet.</p> <p><b>Devil Staring up at sky</b> — Note horns. Look east, beyond Geronimo.</p> <p><b>Superstition Wilderness</b> — To the south and east.</p>  | 11.0                    | 27.5        |
| 213 <sup>1/4</sup>             | <p><b>Tortilla Campground</b> — Has 77 trailer units with space for car, trailer and boats. Has running water, trees and shrubs, and dump station with sewer hook-up. Elevation 1,752 feet. Closed from April until October.</p>   | 11.9                    | 26.8        |
| 213 <sup>1/4</sup> +           | <p><b>Tortilla Flat Store and Post Office</b> — Food and supplies. Next services north on this road are at Roosevelt, 30 miles away. Elevation 1,752 feet. The Post Office was established in 1928 and is still in business. There are at least two versions of how the area came to be known as Tortilla Flat. It is reported that a group of early settlers were stranded here for several days, by high water, and had nothing to eat except tortillas ("tortilla" is the Spanish word for a type of pancake). Another version says it was named for the butte northwest of the store. Do you see the stack of giant hot-cakes?</p> | 11.9                    | 26.7        |



|                    |   |       |       |
|--------------------|---|-------|-------|
| 214 <sup>1/2</sup> | <p><b>Mesquite Flat</b> — Elevation 1,854 feet. An old holding place for gathered cattle. Please drive with extreme care beyond this point.</p>   | 13.0  | 25.7  |
| 218                | <p><b>Horse Mesa Road</b> — North. Horse Mesa Dam (closed to the public) is about 8 miles down a narrow, twisting road.</p>   | 16.3  | 22.5  |
| 218                | <p><b>Horse Mesa Vista</b> — A good vista is a high point to the south. Elevation 2,886 feet. This is a good opportunity for photographers. Horse Mesa is so named because horses could be held on the top by blocking only one trail. The Four Peaks Wilderness was created in 1984, and provides a welcome sanctuary from the motorized equipment and mechanical transport that overwhelm us in everyday life.</p>  | 16.3+ | 22.5+ |
| 220                | <p><b>End of the pavement for northbound; beginning of the pavement for southbound.</b></p>   | 17.5  | 21.4  |
| 221                | <p><b>Tortilla Trailhead Parking</b> — Although a rough 4-wheel drive road goes further, this is a good place to begin a hike into the Superstition Wilderness.</p>   | 18.5  | 20.6  |
| 222                | <p><b>Fish Creek Vista</b> — Pull into rough parking area and take an easy 1/4 mile walk to the north. From this point, you see Four Peaks which is the highest point of the Mazatzal Mountain Range. Follow the west (or left) side of the mesa going out and return on the east side. Points "A" to "C" are best visible on sunny days. Difficult to see on cloudy days. Give free reign to your imagination and see Mother Nature's handiwork; 70 million years of creating unusual fantasies!</p> | 19.4  | 19.6  |

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest  | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |   | South-North             | North-South |
|                                | <p><b>Sitting Judges</b> — look West and down, just above the canyon floor to see the well fed dignitaries.</p> <p><b>Devil's Cauldron</b> — Visible from the NW side of the canyon, 400 to 500 feet below: swirling, yellow-green, broken up rock formation.</p> <p><b>Monkey Butte</b> — Three tiers of monkey faces with varied expressions can be seen from the north edge of the mesa in an island of rock sitting out in the canyon.</p> <p><b>Elephant Rock</b> — Look below and to the right to Monkey Butte. See an elephant head, trunk, eyes, and ears between two dark recesses in the cliff?</p> <p><b>Crucifix with Baby's Head</b> — High on the opposite bluff in a shallow recess, looking toward Apache Trail.</p> <p><b>Black Cross Butte</b> — Southeast. Elevation 4,806 feet. Three miles.</p> <p><b>Fish Creek Peak</b> — East 1/2 mile. Elevation 3,053 feet.</p> <p><b>Fish Creek Mountains</b> — East of the trail.</p> <p><b>Horse Mesa Mountains</b> — North of the vista and trail. Elevation 4,110 feet.</p> <p><b>Castle Dome</b> — East 7.5 miles; elevation 5,308 feet. Has a cap with a white collar.</p> <p><b>Tortilla Mountain</b> — South 3.5 miles; elevation 5,357 feet.</p> <p><b>Coronado Mesa</b> — Large Mesa to the northwest.</p> |                         |             |



|                                 |   |                    |                    |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| 223 <sup>1/2</sup><br>to<br>222 | <p><b>Fish Creek Hill</b> (Use extreme caution while driving over this section of road!) — Spectacular view of Walls of Fish Creek Gorge. As you travel up and down Fish Creek Hill (the most impressive part of the Apache Trail) you will see perpendicular walls shading from copper to bronze in the sunlight and shadows, rising over 1,000 feet from the floor of the canyon to the tops of the sheer cliffs. The tortuous Fish Creek Canyon, particularly to the south, rises even further, culminating in Fish Creek Peak at 3,910 feet (3/4 mile southeast).</p> | 19.5<br>to<br>21.0 | 18.0<br>to<br>19.5 |
| 223                             | <p><b>Horse Mesa</b> to the north has a high point of 4,110 feet. The fascinating array of golden, light green, copper, and bronze coloring on the precipitous cliffs opposite the “Bronze Walls” can best be appreciated with the late afternoon sun when myriad dancing fantasies are created.</p>  | 20.0               | 19.1               |
| 223 <sup>3/4</sup>              | <p><b>A one-lane bridge over Fish Creek.</b> If you can find a safe place to park, you will be treated to a spectacular view upstream into Fish Creek Canyon.</p>   | 21.0               | 18.0               |
| 224 <sup>3/4</sup>              | <p><b>A one-lane bridge over Lewis and Pranty Creek.</b></p>  | 22.2               | 16.7               |
| 226 <sup>1/2</sup>              | <p><b>Arizona State Highway Maintenance Camp</b> — Maintenance of this road is a difficult task, especially when flash floods occur.</p>  | 24.0               | 14.9               |
| 226 <sup>3/4</sup>              | <p><b>Bronco Butte</b> — To the north. Elevation 4,349 feet.</p>  | 24.3               | 14.4               |

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest  | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |   | South-North             | North-South |
| 227 <sup>1/4</sup>             | <b>IV Ranch Road</b> — Headquarters for National Forest grazing permittee. Grazing livestock is one of the many uses accommodated within a National Forest.   | 24.7                    | 14.4        |
| 228 <sup>1/2</sup>             | <b>Reavis Trailhead Road</b> — Taking 2.5 miles of primitive road will bring you to the parking area. Twelve (12) miles of foot trail to old ranch headquarters and to other trails in the Superstition Wilderness.   | 25.0                    | 13.9        |
| 228 <sup>1/2</sup>             | <b>View of Castle Dome</b> — North. Elevation 4,349 feet.   | 25.7                    | 12.7        |
| 229 <sup>1/4</sup>             | <b>Apache Lake Vista Point</b> — Apache Lake is 17 miles long with some of the most interesting scenery of the four Salt River lakes. Horse Mesa on the south shore rises 2,000 feet above the lake. Apache Lake was created with the completion of Horse Mesa Dam in 1927. | 26.7                    | 11.3        |

From the Viewpoint:

**Painted Cliffs** — North side of Apache Lake on rock walls stretching from Horse Mesa Dam on west for 2.5 miles to the east, rising 400 to 500 feet above the lake.

**Goat Mountain** — Flat topped mountain at the east end of Painted Cliffs. Elevation 3,681 feet.

**Buckhorn Mountain** — Large mountain north of Goat Mountains. Elevation 6,812 feet.

**Apache Lake Resort** — Marine facilities, RV camping, motel, camping, etc. One mile north via Forest Road 79.



|                    |   |              |            |  |
|--------------------|---|--------------|------------|--|
| 231 <sup>3/4</sup> | <b>Davis Wash</b>   |              |            |  |
| 233 <sup>1/2</sup> | <b>Pine Creek Bridge</b> — Although it is hard to believe when crossing this narrow bridge, this drainage begins up in the pine trees.  | 29.2         | 9.7        |  |
| 236 <sup>1/4</sup> | <b>Burnt Corral Campground</b> — West on Forest Road 183. A 1/2 mile road takes you to the boat launch area and a shady campground maintained by the Forest Service. Elevation 2,060 feet.  | 31.0         | 7.9        |  |
| 237 to 241         | <b>Apache Lake Gorge</b> — Precipitous cliffs rise over 2,000 feet from the lake, reminding one of Norway's fiords. The narrow 200 mile Salt River was once (prior to its damming) the largest tributary of the Gila River. The roadway varies from 15 feet above the lake level to several hundred in a single mile of travel.<br><br>To avoid accidents, keep right, slow down. Blind curves and narrow roads are treacherous.  | 33.8         | 5.2        |  |
| 240 <sup>1/2</sup> | <b>Theodore Roosevelt Dam</b> — Elevation 2,141 feet. Built from 1906 to 1911, this dam was the first Federal Reclamation Project in the West. It is 284 feet high, 184 feet thick at the base, tapering to 16 feet at the top. The dam is the highest masonry structure in the world. All the rocks used were quarried at the dam site. A cement kiln, the last traces disappearing a few years ago with the new highway realignment, used juniper wood packed in by burros for fuel. This dam is a National Historic Landmark, listed as an official site by the National Park Service. | 35.0 to 39.0 | 0.0 to 4.0 |  |
|                    |   | 39.1         | 0.0        |  |

| State<br>Milepost<br>Reference | Points of Interest   | Trip Odometer Reference |             |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                |  | South-North             | North-South |
|                                | The Salt River Project operates all these dams and controls the water levels on the Salt and Verde lakes, as well as producing electric power. |                         |             |

For those traveling north, this is the end of the National Scenic Byway, however State Highway 88 (now a paved highway) continues on into the Globe/ Miami area where the visitor can return to Phoenix via Highway 60. Another alternative would be to turn left near Roosevelt Dam onto State Highway 188 which provides another scenic drive. We hope you enjoyed your drive on this National Scenic Byway and will visit us again.



NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY



1022348707

\* NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY



1022348707

**"The Apache Trail combines the grandeur of the Alps, the glory of the Rockies, the magnificence of the Grand Canyon and then adds an indefinable something that none of the others have. To me, it is the most awe-inspiring and most sublimely beautiful panorama nature has ever created."**

**President Theodore  
Roosevelt (1858-1919)**